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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; US IMMIGRATION REFORM; US FOREIGN RELATIONS  
COMMITTEE'S DISCUSSION ON US-LATIN AMERICAN TIES; 06/20/07

#### 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Key international topics today include the US immigration reform;  
and the US House Foreign Relations Committee discussion about the  
status of the US-South American relationship.

#### 2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Immigration on the arena"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" (06/20) carries an op-ed piece by  
Alberto Benegas Lynch, Jr., a member of the Advisory Council to the  
London Institute for Economic Affairs, who writes "Nationalistic  
xenophobia is always a serious obstacle to understanding the  
problems affecting people who move to another country. First and  
foremost, they do not seem to be aware of the fact that borders and  
territorial venues are explained by the huge risk posed by the  
concentration of power that one universal government could imply...

"... Now, I am writing a book on the US, basically to demonstrate  
how it has recently gone against the fundamental principles that  
made that nation the most civilized and progressive on earth. One of  
the chapters is related to the war against immigration. The wall  
that was recently built on the US border with Mexico is shameful and  
has nothing to do with safety. The terrorist criminals who launched  
the September 11 attacks entered the US with tourist and student  
visas.

"It has been said that immigrants spark the phenomena of  
over-population. Nevertheless, in 1983, Thomas Sowell demonstrated  
in a book that, by then, the State of Texas could well harbor the  
entire population of the world. The then 4.4 billion inhabitants of  
the world could receive 6,800 square feet of Texan territory per  
each four-member family, which was enough to sustain an average  
family in the US.

"... It is sad to re-read Emma Lazarus' poem ('Give me your tired,  
your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free'), which  
were engraved on the base of the Statue of Liberty because, in spite  
of multiple and justified complaints, those domineering in  
Washington, self-considered indispensable and illuminated, have  
reversed those ideas."

- "The loss of US influence in Latin America"

Ana Baron, Washington-based correspondent for leading "Clarín,"  
writes (06/20) "The Venezuelan concern in Washington is not new, but  
what captured the attention yesterday was the fact that members of  
the House Foreign Relations Committee (both Republicans and  
Democrats) focused on Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's ties to his  
Iranian counterpart, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and the way Iran is

reportedly using Venezuela as a platform to approach other countries of the region. Some spoke about the 'Islamic threat,' others about 'the Iranian danger,' as though Latin America could be a fertile land for the expansion of Islamism and the Middle East theocratic regimes.

"During yesterday's hearing on Capitol Hill, which was held to analyze the 'US-South American broken relationship,' the way the head of that powerful committee, Democratic deputy Tom Lantos criticized Argentine President Nestor Kirchner due to 'his close and regular contacts' with Chavez was also striking. In Lantos' view, there are strongly democratic countries like Brazil and Chile that should fill the gap left by the US and 'recover the regional leading role' that is now being played by the Venezuelan president.

"Three experts in the Southern Cone were called as witnesses of the hearing. Consulted about the Iranian danger, Michael Shifter, VP of the Inter-American Dialogue, said that the US had to be very careful not to exaggerate its reaction because it could 'turn a prophecy into a reality.' In Shifter's view, Latin America is not a fertile land for the expansion of Iran. Peter Smith, professor at the University of California, agreed with him.

"For his part, Jaime Daremblum, head of the Center for Latin American Studies, Hudson Institute, said 'The concern over Iran is exaggerated. I do not see it as a problem looming on the horizon.'

"... By the end of the meeting, Shifter and Smith agreed that the Venezuelan rearmament particularly poses a threat to its neighbors and not to the US."

- "In the US view, the (Argentine) President is still a riddle"

Hugo Alconada Mon, Washington-based correspondent for daily-of-record "La Nacion," comments (06/20) "Four years after having taken office, President Nestor Kirchner is still a riddle for

the US, which does not know where to place him when evaluating the governments of the region. As a matter of fact, the US defines him as a 'sui generis' leader.

"The 'Kirchner riddle' was tackled yesterday at a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, which discussed 'South America and the US - how to repair a broken relationship.' During the hearing, the legislators and academics placed Kirchner far from his most praised counterparts from Brazil, Uruguay or Chile, and closer to the most criticized ones, like the leaders of Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia or Ecuador, although not completely with either.

"Tom Lantos, the head of the Committee, said... 'The Kirchner administration has led a significant economic recovery..., but Kirchner seems to listen to Chavez's advice with alarming regularity.'

"Additionally, he contrasted Kirchner with other governments of the region that are 'strongly democratic,' which 'should fill the gap and claim the regional leading role played by Chavez.' Lantos praised Brazil and Uruguay and underscored that 'Peru and Uruguay imply a considerable promise.'

"On the other extreme, Chavez epitomizes a concern that is shared by both Republicans and Democrats.

"... However, Michael Shifter, VP, Inter American Dialogue, noted a difference. Caracas' allies in Latin America are Fidel Castro, Evo Morales, Rafael -Correa and Daniel Ortega. 'Chavez has limited followers in countries like Brazil and Argentina. Most of the countries are uncomfortable with his confrontational political style.'"

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